

Want to impress on Valentine's Day? Then make sure to wear red

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Credit: Designecologist from Pexels

Sexual attractiveness is a preoccupation that clings to us throughout our daily lives. Today's social media obsession with perfect beauty makes being attractive and feeling attractive seem all the more important. Being

attractive feels crucial for increasing one's chances of romantic relationships. Wearing red, especially on Valentine's Day, might be helpful when people want to impress.

The factors that influence people's attractiveness to others are well documented. They include [physical attributes](#), such as [height and build](#), but also nonphysical characteristics such as [kindness](#), [social status](#) and [emotional stability](#).

Recent research has also [investigated colour](#), specifically the colour red, as an influence on attractiveness. A group of researchers around Andrew J. Elliot, a professor of psychology, [found](#) that people perceived others as more [attractive](#) when they were presented with the colour red.

According to the [colour-in-context theory](#), one reason for this effect can be found in colour associations due to biologically based predispositions. The colour red, for example, is regarded as a sexual signal that might have evolved from our [biological heritage](#). This reasoning is supported by research showing that nonhuman female primates exhibit red coloration as an indicator of fertility.

Research on colour associations indicates that people [across cultures](#) link red to love and passion.

Two colleagues and I [investigated](#) whether the red effect came into play in self-perception. Given that individuals' clothing seems to have a [profound impact](#) on people's self-perception, we decided to [take a closer look](#) at the potential effect of the colour red on people's perception of their own attractiveness.

We found that people wearing red rated themselves as more attractive than study participants wearing blue. The self-perception red effect was found for both female and male participants in our study.

One possible conclusion to draw from this is that people who view themselves as being attractive are, at the same time, perceived as more attractive by potential mating partners than individuals who are less convinced about their personal attractiveness.

Wearing red might be helpful in two ways.

First, the original red effect (independently from any [self-perception](#) aspects) can kick in, giving individuals the chance to be perceived as more attractive, leading others to believe that the person is more sexually receptive or higher in [social status](#).

Second, increasing the perception of one's own attractiveness thanks to red and feeling good about oneself might give others the impression of confidence, which is usually considered to be an attractive trait.

Our findings

In the first experiment, we tested whether the colour red increased people's perception of self-attractiveness.

After putting on an assigned shirt (some were red, some blue), participants completed a questionnaire assessing personality traits and their perceived self-attractiveness. They were asked to indicate their agreement with a couple of statements. For example: "At the moment, I consider myself attractive."

Participants wearing a red shirt rated themselves as more attractive than the participants in the control group wearing a blue shirt. No differences were found between female and [male participants](#).

We then decided to modify the procedure. Participants were again provided with a standardised red or blue T-shirt and were asked to take a

snapshot of themselves. They were told that their snapshot would be given to experts who would judge the participant's personality on the basis of specific facial features (such as symmetry).

Participants were given a questionnaire to fill out containing questions on their personality and attractiveness. In a final study, we added some questions about the participants' self-perceived sexual receptivity. For example: "I can imagine being sexually active today."

And self-perceived status: "At the moment I am a person of high standing."

Participants in the red shirts rated themselves as more attractive, more sexually receptive and higher in status than those in the blue shirts.

Since no statistical differences regarding gender emerged, it is likely that both male and female participants profit equally from the colour red in terms of their increased status and sexual receptivity.

Given that the number of participants in the final study was relatively small, the findings regarding [status](#) and sexual receptivity should be considered with some caution.

Nevertheless, the pattern of results about the effect of red on self-perceived attractiveness was quite stable across all studies. So there is reason to believe that it is possible to heighten one's own attractiveness by wearing the [colour](#) red.

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